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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 001411

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NB AND EUR/RPM

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SUBJECT: LITHUANIAN DEFMIN CRITICIZES NATO MEMBERS' RECALCITRANCE OVER IRAQ TRAINING MISSION

Classified By: POL/ECON OFFICER TREVOR BOYD
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (U) Lithuanian Defense Minister Linas Linkevicius, in an interview with the Baltic News Service on November 15, criticized the decision by ten NATO allies not to send instructors to the armed forces training mission in Iraq. Linkevicius remarked that he did not believe this decision, although a departure from the conclusions of the Istanbul summit, presaged a split in the alliance. Echoing public comments by NATO SACEUR James Jones, the DefMin said that such "exceptions should not be tolerated, because they make it difficult for the alliance's military commanders to plan operations." Linkevicius noted there had been similar difficulties generating a rotation schedule for the now successful Baltic air-policing mission.

¶2. (C) The MFA's Kestutis Jankauskas, Director of Security Policy, told us that Foreign Minister Antanas Valionas had cautioned (in a statement BNS chose not to run) against too quickly criticizing all ten NATO members who chose not to send instructors to Iraq. Jankauskas noted that, had Lithuania already met their troop authorization ceiling for Iraq, they would have had to seek special authorization from Parliament to send the three officers they've now dedicated to the training mission. While acknowledging that one or two NATO partners will predictably diverge from the fold, Jankauskas thought that logistical obstacles rather than political objections had prevented some NATO countries from sending participants.

¶3. (SBU) Comment. Linkevicius's public statement reflects the government's commitment to active membership in NATO and its staunch and reliable partnership in the Coalition.

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